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ABSTRACT

Intended to help teachers to use language and visuals that will help open the doors of equality by breaking away from sexist language and traditional patterns, this guide begins with a brief overview of the importance of language media culture. Some general guidelines for improving communication are suggested in the introduction and several additional manuals on the subject are noted. More detailed guidelines with examples are presented in nine brief chapters: (1) "Pronouns: Each Person, to the Best of Her or His Ability"; (2) "Nouns and Verbs: All Men and Women Are Created Equal"; (3) "Titles: People Working"; (4) "Parallel Forms: 'I Now Pronounce You Woman and Husband?'"; (5) "Rethinking Adjectives: Pithy, Limiting...or Wrong?"; (6) "Secondary Sources: 'And She Can Cook, Too (Sic)!'"; (7) "Broadcast: For Your Listeners"; (8) "Visual Images: Make Each 'Thousand Words' Count"; and (9) "Classrooms: When You Are the Message." The final chapter includes a check list for teachers to use as a self test. Also included are two sources of additional information, a 33-item bibliography, and three pages of appropriate clip art. (DJR)

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Guide to NONSEXIST LANGUAGE and VISUALS

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RHONDA LEE, Editor

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Foreword

The debate over whether language follows cultural usage or helps define it has been going on for centuries.

But the many social, economic, cultu olitical and legal changes affecting women and minorit uring the Twentieth Century have found our language and orial images to lag far behind the times in recognizing the n of both sexes and many races in the workplace, government and society.

In the media culture we live in, language and visual images are the dominant symbols and portrayers of reality. But many of our language terms and pictures place symbolic value only on selective aspects of reality. In stereotyping or ignoring women, minorities, the elderly and handicapped, our language and visuals do not present a full view of the variety of roles individual men and women actually play in our society—thus limiting the potential participation of more than half the human race.

This *Guide to Nonsexist Language and Visuals* will help you—as teachers and communicators—to use language and visuals that will help open the doors of equality, participation and potential for all. I urge you to read it and use it in your work.

Patrick G. Boyle
Chancellor
University of Wisconsin-Extension

Acknowledgement

Thank you for your thoughtful and enlightening comments, all the astute language and media critics and educators who volunteered to review this guide.

Department of Agricultural Journalism
Department of Home Economics Communications
University of Wisconsin-Extension Chancellor's Office
University of Wisconsin-Extension Equal Opportunities Program
Women's Education Resources, Department of Governmental Affairs
Women's Studies Program

Introduction

With a little thought, you can use accurate, lively, figurative language in your columns, newsletters, publications, workshops, classrooms, broadcasts and telecommunications—and still represent people fairly. Breaking away from sexist language and traditional patterns can refresh your style.

You can follow two abbreviated rules to check material for bias: Would you say the same thing about a person of the opposite sex? Would you like it said about you? That's the bottom line. Use your own good sense on whether a joke, comment or image is funny—or whether it unfairly exploits people and perpetuates stereotypes.

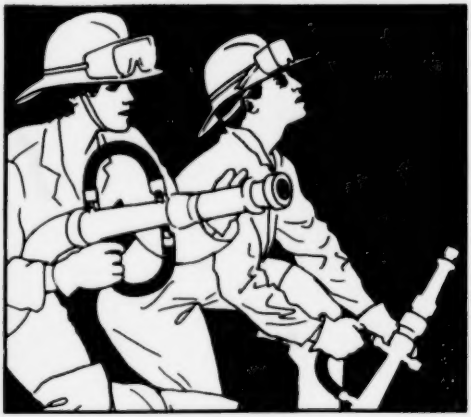
Most fairness rules improve communication. Use explicit, active words; give concrete examples, specifics and anecdotes to demonstrate facts; present your message in context of the "big picture"; draw your reader in; use parallel forms; present a balanced view; and avoid cliches and generalizations that limit communication. Balanced language rules also guide you to choose or create balanced visual images.

Good communication respects individual worth, dignity, integrity and capacity. It treats people equally despite their sex, race, age, disability, socio-economic background or creed. And it expresses fairness and balance. To communicate effectively, use real people, describe their unique characteristics and offer specific information. Using stereotypes or composites stifles communication and neglects human potential.

As a communicator, teacher or illustrator, you can help correct and eliminate irrelevant and inaccurate concepts about what it means to be male or female, black or white, young or old, rich or poor, healthy or disabled, or to hold a particular belief.

Editing, publishing and style manuals recognize the need for creating accurate, quality messages without slighting anyone and are beginning to prescribe standards for writing and evaluating manuscripts that represent people without stereotyping them.

For example, South-Western Publishing Co. asks authors to present people as whole human beings with strengths, weaknesses, varying characteristics, traits, interests, capabilities, career goals and possibilities. Their editors request that authors



present textbook people who make important contributions to culture and society with equal standing, esteem and respect, and reflect what society can and should be, rather than mirror injustice, insensitivity and prejudice.

The *Washington Post* has developed an "Are-You-A-Sexist Checklist." Scott, Foresman Co., Macmillan, McGraw-Hill, Lippincott, Harper & Row and other major publishers also have prepared nonsexist guidelines for textbook authors.

Many of the following examples are adapted from *Guidelines for Equal Treatment of the Sexes in McGraw-Hill Book Company Publications* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974) and the International Association of Business Communicators' *Without Bias: A Guidebook for Nondiscriminatory Communication*, Second Edition, Copyright ©1982, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York (adapted with permission). University of Wisconsin-Extension writers, editors, teachers, administrators, designers and broadcasters reviewed this guide.

As guidelines, most examples fit a variety of situations. You can improve your language even more by using specific replacements tailored to fit your topic.

PRONOUNS: Each Person, To the Best of Her or His Ability

This guide will help each University of Wisconsin-Extension employee balance her language and images in press releases, newsletters, publications, lectures, workshops and telecommunications.

First, she must dispel the myth that "she" is a universal generic pronoun referring to both sexes. Like other generics, this one may cost less but limits choices and increases ambiguity.

How many male Extension personnel do you picture when you read the pronoun she? Routinely using male nouns and pronouns to refer to "generic" people excludes more than half the population. Similarly, using female nouns and pronouns to communicate family living or nursing information excludes men.

For example, you can't accurately address a farm audience if you address only men. Couples or families own many farms, and there's usually a "she" getting just as deeply in debt. To accurately write about farm finances, use plural pronouns. Making nouns plural to ensure plural pronouns can help you avoid using the singular "generic" male pronoun.

When you are not writing about specific people, you can vary the following methods replacing the false generic "he" to keep your language lively and your audience comfortable.

1. Address Your Reader

No. If he adopts conservation tillage, the farmer can curb soil loss.

Yes. If you adopt conservation tillage, you can curb soil loss.

2. Eliminate the Pronoun

No. Each nurse determines the best way she can treat a patient.

Yes. Each nurse determines the best way to treat a patient.

3. Replace Pronouns With Articles

No. A careful secretary consults her dictionary often.

Yes. A careful secretary consults a dictionary often.

4. Use Plural Nouns and Pronouns

No. Teach the child to walk by himself.	*Yes.* Teach children to walk by themselves.
He is expanding his operation.	They are expanding their operation.
Everyone needs his own space.	All people need their own space.

(*Note:* We don't recommend using "their" to refer to a singular noun.)

5. Alternate Male and Female Pronouns Throughout Text

No. The baby tries to put everything he finds in his mouth.	*Yes.* The baby tries to put everything she finds in her mouth.

6. Use Both Pronouns and Vary Their Order

No. A worker with minor children should make sure his will is up to date.	*Yes.* A worker with minor children should make sure her or his will is up to date.

7. Use Specific, Genderless Nouns

No. The average man on the street speaks his mind on the issues.	*Yes.* The average voter speaks out on political issues.

8. Substitute Job Titles or Descriptions

No. He writes publications on how to control fleas.	*Yes.* The Extension entomologist writes publications on how to control fleas.

9. Repeat the Noun or Use a Synonym

No. A farmer who lives next to a tract of land that becomes public need not fear he must pay higher taxes.	*Yes.* A farmer who lives next to a tract of public land need not fear that property owners must pay higher taxes.

10. Avoid Generalizing an Animal's Sex

No. The lamb was off his feed.	*Yes.* The lamb was off its feed.
	The ewe had twins, but she refused to accept one.

(*Note:* Nations, battleships, gas tanks and other objects have no gender.)

NOUNS & VERBS: All Men and Women Are Created Equal

Using "man" to refer to people is an anachronism of our language that also misinforms your audience about our culture, history, ancestors and the development of society. This use is sexist because it obscures women's contributions to civilization, excludes them from activities, and sometimes causes misunderstandings and bad feelings. You can replace such limiting language and cliches with more accurate or encompassing terms.

1. Substitute Specific Nouns to Express What You Really Mean

No	*Yes*
Men, manpower	Labor, human resources, human energy, work force, personnel
Man on the street, common man/average man	Person on the street, common person, voter, resident, passer-by, citizen, taxpayer, land/homeowner, worker
Brotherhood of man	Human bond, humankind, humanity

2. Use Encompassing Nouns

No	*Yes*
Man/men, mankind	Human(s), human being(s), humanity, person(s), people, individuals, human race, women and men, someone, anyone
Modern man	Modern civilization/people, the modern age
Red man	American Indian
White man	Caucasian
Englishmen	The English, English citizens, English people, British

Prudent/reasonable man	Prudent person
Working man	Worker, wage earner
Workmen's compensation	Workers' Compensation (*Note:* This is also the correct legal term in Wisconsin.)

3. Add Women

No	*Yes*
Man is a dreamer	Women and men are dreamers.

4. Use Specific Verbs

No	*Yes*
To man (something)	Work, cover, run, staff, steer, occupy, take, supply personnel, operate
To manhandle	Subdue, force, handle roughly

TITLES: People Working

Many professional titles and workplace terms exclude women and unfairly link men with their earning capacity, while others patronize and subordinate women. Such nongeneric titles reinforce assumptions restricting women and men to stereotypical roles, inaccurately identify people and give false images of people and how they live and work.

Above all, call adults by adult names, avoid redundant or disparaging expressions and reword the sentence when -person suffixes seem awkward. Often you can replace an offending noun with its active verb. For example, you can reword a sentence to replace draftsman with the correct form of the verb to draft.

You can use more encompassing language to eliminate sex-specific suffixes and prefixes, but be careful not to overdo it. Some "man" prefixes are not male but based on the Latin word "manus," which means hand: manufacture, manipulate, mandate,

manuscript. And you can correctly apply -man or -woman suffixes when you refer to specific people: Congressman Robert Kastenmeier (D-Wis.), Congresswoman Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.).

You can find appropriate generic titles in the U.S. Department of Labor's *Job Title Revisions to Eliminate Sex and Age-Referent Language from the Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (Third Edition, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975). Some are included below; check your library for more.

1. Replace Language Stereotyping Men

No	*Yes*
Businessman/men	Business person/people, people in business, executive, merchant, industrialist, entrepreneur, manager
Cameraman	Camera operator, photographer
Chairman	Chairperson, chair, moderator, group leader, department head, presiding officer
Congressmen	Members of Congress, Representatives, congressmen and congresswomen
Craftsman	Craftsperson, artisan
Deliveryman/boy	Delivery driver/clerk, porter, deliverer, courier, messenger
Draftsman	Drafter
Fireman	Fire fighter
Foreman	Supervisor
Guys	Men, people
Headmaster	Principal
Kingpin	Key person, leader
Lumberman	Wood chopper, tree/lumber cutter
Male nurse	Nurse
Manhole/cover	Sewer hole, utility access/cover

Man-hours	Labor, staff/work hours, time
Manmade	Manufactured, hand-built, handmade, synthetic, simulated, machine-made
Night watchman	Night guard, night watch
Policeman	Police officer, detective
Pressman	Press operator
Repairman, handyman	Repairer (Better: plumber, electrician, carpenter, steam fitter's apprentice)
Salesman/men	Salespeople, salesperson(s), sales agent(s), sales associate(s), sales representative(s), sales force
Spokesman	Representative, spokesperson, advocate, proponent
Sportsman	Sports/outdoor enthusiast (Better: hunter, fisher, canoer)
Sportsmanship	Fair play
Statesman	Political leader, public servant, diplomat
Statesmanship	Diplomacy
Steward/stewardess	Flight attendant
Weatherman	Weather reporter, meteorologist
Workmen	Workers

2. Replace Titles Stereotyping Women

No	*Yes*
Authoress	Author
Aviatrix	Pilot
Career girl/woman	Professor, engineer, mathematician, administrative assistant
Coed	Student

Gal, Girl, Girl Friday	Woman, secretary, assistant, aide (Better: full name)
Housewife, lady of the house	Homemaker, consumer, customer, shopper, parent
Lady/female doctor, lawyer	Doctor, lawyer
Little lady, better half	Spouse, partner
Maid, cleaning lady	Houseworker, housekeeper, custodian
Poetess	Poet
Sculptress	Sculptor
Usherette	Usher
Waitress	Wait person, waiter
Working wife/mother	Worker

PARALLEL FORMS: "I Now Pronounce You Woman and Husband"?

Using parallel forms means saying "I like dancing and skiing" instead of "I like dancing and to ski." When you correct sexist language using parallel forms, no one is an attachment, possession or baggage. Many churches are modifying texts and marriage vows using parallel forms to reflect equality.

The Associated Press Stylebook omits courtesy titles Mr., Mrs. and Ms. Use the person's full name on first mention and last name alternating with descriptive synonyms on subsequent mentions. (Example: Sarah Jane Smith on first mention, then Smith, British journalist, or investigative reporter.)

For parallel form, if you write about men's achievements, write about women's achievements, too. And if you want to write about how women look, then write about how men look—but first be certain appearances are relevant.

Avoid mixing mental attributes and professional position with physical attributes or social position. When deciding when girls and boys become women and men, use the same age cutoffs.

For interesting, factual communication, describe a person's real traits. Show, don't tell your readers. Use adjectives and qualifiers sparingly; avoid subjective descriptions that make judgments; and give specific examples, anecdotes and facts to support statements you make about people. Show how "only man" and "only woman" stories fit into the big picture and represent behavior or qualities natural to all people.

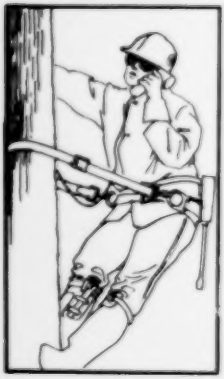
1. Use Equivalent Titles and Address

No	*Yes*
Man and wife	Husband and wife, woman and man, couple
Mrs. Chisholm and Rep. Udall	Rep. Chisholm and Rep. Udall, Shirley Chisholm and Morris Udall
The Tony Earls	Tony and Sheila Earl (*Note:* If she were governor, Sheila would come first.)
Truman's widow	Bess Truman
Mrs. August Friendly, wife of the teacher education advisor	June Friendly, social sciences statistician
Pioneers trekked across the prairies with their wives and children.	Pioneer families trekked aross the prairies.
The man who married the shipping magnate's daughter	The man who married the heir to a shipping fortune
Samuel Style, communications expert, and his lovely wife Beth. (Mixed attributes)	The Styles are an attractive couple. Sam and Beth keep fit by running competitively. (Parallel form)
You and your wife	You and your spouse/ guest/friend (Better: name)
Farmers and their wives	Farming men and women, men and women on farms, farm couples, farmers, farm families
Men and ladies	Ladies and gentlemen, women and men

2. Replace Stereotypical Adjectives and Expressions

No	*Yes*
Act like a lady and think like a man	Act and think sensitively and clearly
Act like a gentleman/man	Be polite, brave, keep your chin up
Dear Sir	Dear Madam or Sir, Dear Personnel Officer/Director, Dear Executive/Manager (Better: name)
Fatherland	Homeland, native land
Founding fathers	Pioneers, colonists, patriots, forebears, founders
Gentleman's agreement	Informal agreement, your word, oral contract, handshake
Ladylike, girlish, sissy, effeminate	Tender, cooperative, polite, neat, fearful, weak, illogical, inactive (Both male and female characteristics)
Lady luck	Luck
Layman, layman's terms	Lay, common, ordinary, informal, nontechnical
Maiden name	Birth name
Maiden voyage	First/premiere voyage
Male chauvinist	Chauvinist
Male ego	Ego
Man-sized	Husky, sizable, big, large, voracious
Man-to-man defense/talk	Player-to-player, person-to-person, face-to-face, one-to-one
Manly, tomboy	Courageous, strong, vigorous, adventurous, spirited, direct, competitive, physical, mechanical, logical, rude, active, messy, self-confident (Both female and male characteristics)

Mother doing dishes, father reading the paper	Men and women doing dishes, women and men reading the paper (*Note:* Also applies to visual images)
Mother Nature, Father Time	Nature, time
Mothering, fathering	Parenting
Motherly	Protective, supportive, kind
Unwed mother	Mother
Woman did well for a woman/ as well as a man	Woman did well, woman performed competently
Woman's/man's work	Avoid (Too broad; use specifics)
Women's page	Lifestyle, living section



RETHINKING ADJECTIVES: Pithy, Limiting. . .or Wrong?

What are "feminine" or "masculine" characteristics? Harvard psychologist Carol Gilligan says that what some psychological theories take to be women's deficiencies are merely differences from men. And only a handful of differences between sexes withstand careful scrutiny, reports Carol Jacklin, director of the University of Southern California Program for the Study of Men and Women in Society.

You can use many colorful adjectives accurately to describe a particular person's qualities. But those same words become sexist if you apply them uniquely to women and attribute the same qualities positively to men. The alternate choices below are not synonyms, but rather they point out this disparity. They are thought guides, more than writing rules.

Not Exclusively Female Quality	***Same Quality Often Ascribed to Men***
Bitter	Ironic, humorous
Brazen	Fearless, dauntless
Compulsive	Competent, efficient
Domineering	Forceful, charismatic
Drudge	Industrious, hard worker
Frivolous	Lighthearted, easygoing
Gabby	Talkative, articulate
Gossip	Conversation, talking together
Homely	Pleasant-looking, ordinary
Hysterical	Angry, outraged
Nosy	Curious, interested
Obsessive	Prudent, careful
Over-sensitive	Thoughtful, considerate
Scatterbrained	Absentminded, forgetful
Scheming, devious	Shrewd, analytical
Stubborn	Obstinate, strong-willed

SECONDARY SOURCES: "And She Can Cook, Too [Sic]!"

What do you do when your language observes all the good rules of equality, yet your information source stereotypes or demeans people?

Handle sexism in direct quotes the same way you handle other tasteless material.

1. ***Quote the source.*** To confront a sexist attitude, add something documented from another source. This educates your audience and pins responsibility on the speaker.
2. ***Add [sic] after the offending remark*** within quotes. Sic means the source made the error, not the writer.
3. ***Paraphrase the quote,*** omit quotation marks and attribute the source.
4. ***Partially quote the material,*** rephrase the offensive part without changing the speaker's intent and attribute the source.
5. ***Omit the quote entirely.***

BROADCASTS: For Your Listeners

Sexism in broadcast communication is most evident when men represent authority and women add the lighter touch. Your object is to convey a message. Select speakers for your broadcasts or teleconference programs who competently handle the topic, explain, convince and entertain.

Researchers report that alternating male and female voices changes pitch. This change attracts and holds the listeners' attention. You can also alternate male and female voices to narrate films and slide presentations.

Be sure to use parallel titles and address for both men and women. Consistently using both first and last names will do this and also tells late listeners who is speaking.

Prepare introductions according to balanced language guidelines and edit scripts for bias using the nonsexist writing rules.

VISUAL IMAGES: Make Each "Thousand Words" Count

Use the same rules for nonsexist visual media as for language. Images convey equally important messages. Use nonverbal information to reinforce verbal or written information.

For non-news photos, examine faces, body shapes, touching, postures, gestures and territory or position to ensure equality. Watch that photos do not stereotypically represent anyone being dominant, subordinate or having a psychological or power advantage, such as men always driving a vehicle with women as passengers.

1. ***Portray persons of comparable status equally.***

2. ***Use visuals to correct stereotypical roles.*** For example, they should reflect the fact that two-parent families with stay-at-home mothers are the minority today, comprising less than 7 percent of American families. If you are using visuals that reinforce stereotypes, you can treat them like sexist quotes. You can ignore them. Instead of the photo, use the person's name, occupation or relevant information. Save the photo space for newsworthy items. However, when you create your own images or work with a photographer or artist, give the subjects depth by letting them show interest in the event or subject (i.e., avoid cheese/beefcake publicity images).

3. ***Use balanced writing rules for photo captions or cutlines.*** Give all men and women full names.

4. ***Present a comprehensive, balanced image.*** For example, show researchers, a work team or representative group rather than department heads or officials.

5. ***Present realistic images of age.*** For example, visuals should indicate that there are more older women than older men. But edit out unattractive characteristics that might embarrass your subjects—or you. Help correct the stereotype that older women are hags but older men have character. And let old people show affection.

Television presents further challenges to ensuring a balanced view. Camera operators can present a point of view by selection, angle, lighting, focus, distance and level. For example, birds-eye shots diminish your subjects to undifferentiated masses; close-ups to the face are intimate; and angling up con-

notes authority. In the studio, seat people equally distant from cameras. Eye level focus, equal lighting and angle can help ensure nonsexist broadcast images.

If you want a good exercise, monitor advertising. Television advertising often provides excellent examples of what not to do. Sexist ads may sell computers or luxury cars, but they rarely portray women accurately or fairly.

CLASSROOMS: When You Are the Message

Your appearance, posture, tone of voice and eye contact communicate as much as your carefully prepared lecture or slide presentation. Making eye contact with and eliciting comments from both women and men in the back of the room as well as the front row draws in your audience.

To make sure your classroom is free from sexist language and behavior, check if you can answer yes to these questions based on issues identified by the Project on the Status and Education of WOMEN, Washington, DC, in *The Classroom Climate, A Chilly One for Women?*.

☐ Do I acknowledge both women and men when I address the class?
(*Note:* If you use "generic" male nouns and pronouns or ask your students what they did when they were boys or what their wives do, you must answer no to this question.)

- ☐ Do I present women and men in a variety of social and professional roles and avoid stereotypes in classroom examples or visuals?
- ☐ Do I call on women as directly as I call on men?
- ☐ Do I invite comments from women as often as I do from men?
- ☐ Do I allow both women and men the same amount of time to respond before calling on the next student?
- ☐ Do I respond equally to women's and men's comments?
- ☐ Do I call on both women and men by name?
- ☐ Do I credit both women and men by name for their comments?
- ☐ Do I use the same tone of voice when addressing men and women?
- ☐ Do I ask women and men the same kinds (e.g., analytical, factual) of questions?
- ☐ Do I make eye contact equally with women and men when they ask questions?
- ☐ Do I assume an equally attentive posture, such as leaning forward, when women and men speak?
- ☐ Do I encourage both women and men to think for themselves?
  (*Note:* If you ask women questions that require factual answers but ask men questions that demand personal evaluation and critique, you must answer no to this question.)
- ☐ Do I group both women and men in discussion or lab sections or on field-work teams?
- ☐ Are women and men interrupted about the same during class discussions?
  (*Note:* Neither should be interrupted by you or their peers.)
- ☐ Do I give men and women the same instructions and encourage initiatives?
- ☐ Do I allow women and men equally to view laboratory assignments or class demonstrations?
- ☐ Do I offer women the same informal feedback, encouragement or praise for academic efforts as I offer men?
- ☐ Do I choose women and men to assist me equally and assign women the same responsibilities as men?
- ☐ Do I encourage women and men equally to enroll in "harder" subjects?
- ☐ Do I include both men and women in course-related activities, such as field trips?
- ☐ Do I inform both women and men equally about publication, research and professional opportunities?
- ☐ Do I probe both women and men to provide fuller answers or elaborate?

We all need to laugh at ourselves sometimes. A good joke lightens up your audience and helps hold their attention. But remember that jokes demeaning one sex or certain group of people embarrass and alienate rather than entertain.

Avoid comments or actions that ridicule or disparage any student's scholarship, intellectual ability, potential, competency, seriousness, skill or academic commitment. Treat both male and female students as capable of scholastic and professional achievements.

For example, using men's last names but women's first names erodes women's esteem. Remember to address students consistently. And keep students' work and colleagues' professional accomplishments separate from their physical attributes or appearance. You may want to refer to the previous section on using parallel forms.

Resources

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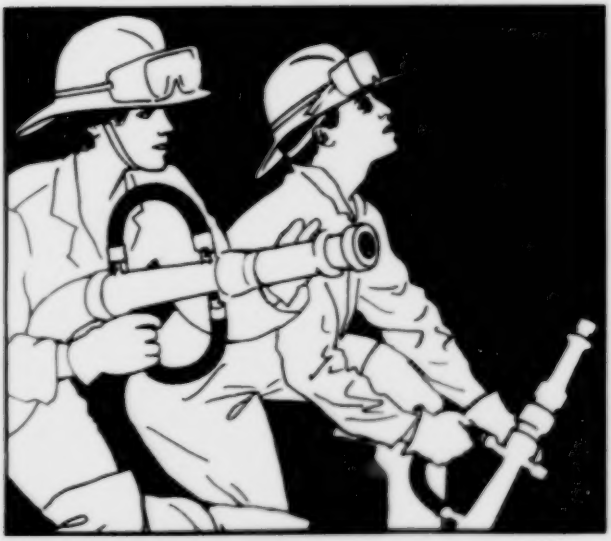

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